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## ORAL ENGLISH

English teaching in America is slowly but surely evolving into a science, and that science recognizes the basic importance of the adequate teaching of the mother tongue. Such teaching affects the English classroom first, but soon must extend to all subjects, and must be particularly emphasized in the elementary schools. At present, the neglect of discipline in English speech for children in the lower grades is startlingly universal.<sup>1</sup> Ignorance of the science of speech and of a classroom procedure calculated to apply it, is general. Hence, teachers are asking, "What is the relation of oral work to the other phases of English teaching? How shall I conduct my classes to secure better speech without losing ground in written work and literature? What may I do personally to meet most effectively this new challenge?"

This bulletin is only a primer. It attempts to offer merely some sane beginnings of answers to these questions. Teachers should realize clearly, however, that we are as yet only on the threshold of the problem of speech teaching. It is a part of their business to study the science of phonetics and of speaking in a wider sense, and to do their share in promoting in America a really adequate administrative handling of this tremendously important and curiously neglected field.

### THE TEACHER'S PART

The personal responsibility of the teacher can not be overestimated. Her own example outweighs all else. No teacher need present an unfortunate one; it is as truly within her power to reform herself as her pupils. Two plain rules confront her at the outset:

<sup>1</sup> For actual time given in twelve representative cities, see "Oral English in the Primary Grades" by Annie Moore in the *Teachers College Record*, May 1919.

talk less; talk better. She may cultivate her ability to speak with skill and beauty by understanding and practising the physiology and psychology of voice, and by striving constantly to make her own speech a model in quality, rate, inflection, choice of words, structure and taste. In all grades, moreover, as Mr Percival Chubb urges, "she must be more book free; she must have a larger store of memorized pieces, and be able to do with them what she wishes her children to do. Eyes must be on her, not on books. Much memorizing, by pupil and teacher alike, must be our first requirement . . . and let us always sing from memory."

Teachers should recognize that the adoption of an oralized type of class work is not a release from, but a quickening of, responsibility.

### SANE BEGINNINGS

The enthusiasm shown by English teachers for oral English and the intelligence with which they attack this work will chiefly determine its success. The subject must be approached by the teacher with the feeling that instead of being an added burden it is a means of economizing time and effort and of producing better results, not only in the speech of pupils but also in their writing, in their appreciation, and in their ability to listen to what others say. This enthusiasm will come with understanding. Teachers who are able to handle the subject effectively "would not go back to the old way for anything." If a teacher really feels the value of this work, her teaching will be doubly effective.

We shall go a great way in our schools if we insist upon good posture and clean-cut enunciation and pronunciation. Good posture is not the business of the English department alone, but of the school, and should be required by the principal as a matter of morale.<sup>1</sup> The following extracts from a letter written by the Adjutant General's office, Washington, August 28, 1917, are in point concerning the probable cause of the considerable number of rejections of candidates for reserve officers at the training camps:

"Perhaps the most glaring faults noted in aspirants to the officers' reserve corps and one that might be corrected by proper attention in our high schools, preparatory schools and colleges, might be characterized by the general word 'slouchiness.' I refer to what might be termed a mental and

<sup>1</sup> The American Posture League, 1 Madison av., New York, N. Y., furnishes excellent charts at 10 cents each, showing correct standing and sitting posture. Consult also the Physical Training Syllabus.

physical indifference. I have observed at my camp many otherwise excellent men who have failed because in our school system sufficient emphasis is not placed upon the avoidance of this mental and physical handicap.

"At military camps throughout the country mental alertness, accuracy in thinking and acting, clearness in enunciation, sureness and ease of carriage and bearing must be insisted upon, for two reasons, that success may be assured as nearly as human effort can guarantee it with the material and means at hand, and that priceless human lives may not be criminally sacrificed. *Only by the possession of the qualities referred to does one become a natural leader.*

"A great number of men have failed at camp because of inability to articulate clearly. Many men disqualified by this handicap might have become officers under their country's flag had they been properly trained in school and college.

"It is hoped therefore that more emphasis will be placed upon the basic principles of elocution in the training of our youth . . . . Great improvement could be wrought by instructors in our schools and colleges, regardless of the subject, insisting that all answers be given in a loud, clear, well-rounded voice, which, of course, necessitates the opening of the mouth and free movement of the lips.

"In addition to this physical disability and slouchiness is what might be termed the slouchiness of mental attitude. Many men have not been trained to appreciate the importance of accuracy in thinking. Too many schools are satisfied with an approximate answer to questions. Little or no incentive is given increased mental effort to coordinate one's ideas and present them clearly and unequivocally . . . ."

The most effective way to speak to others is face to face. Pupils should be taught to take the floor and to face audiences squarely, and to recite, for the most part, topically, in a continuity of thought and speech. They should be coached, until poise becomes a habit, to collect themselves and their audience by pausing before beginning, and to maintain their positions on the floor until they have finished.

To avoid increasing confusion to pupils who are trying honestly, criticism should begin on the subject "*What of the idea?*" Indeed it is well to recognize that form is a by-product, to be achieved by centering effort in the pursuit of the content; we shall secure effective speaking by no other principle. To help shy and awkward children to forget themselves, the teacher may suggest supplementary material. Newspaper clippings, cartoons, pictures, books, black-board diagrams, maps, guide books, the lantern or phonograph, simple machinery and equipment brought in, may prove useful.

Confident children may be used as models, and in the grades and first high school year, where the dramatic instinct is strong, pantomime may aid. Miss Emma Breck, in the English Journal for January 1914, suggests the following:

(1) Simple still life studies, in which the pupil takes a single, expressive attitude; (2) individual action, presenting familiar processes, such as making bread, pitching hay, etc.; (3) posture and action by groups, using scenes from history, literature or current events; (4) charades; (5) pantomime of an original plot.

**Elementary speech sounds and enunciation.** Much can be done, even now, to overcome the universal carelessness and slovenliness in the matter of enunciation and pronunciation. *Use* is the key word of a wise procedure. For ten minutes of the English class period, during the opening month of school, drill in vocalizing vowels and consonants (p. 18, Academic English Syllabus) will be profitable. It should be introduced by a clear statement of its purpose, and should be reenforced by application of the principles of enunciation to oral reading and speech. A close scrutiny of the class speech may determine the strategy of emphasis in the drill. It is clearly worth while to teach the positions and use of the speech organs only to pupils who can not use them well.

Here are presented general exercises for the use of the class, and a few rudimentary remedial exercises for speech defects, such as muffled or nasal voices, stuttering, lisping etc.

(a) Breathe deeply and repeatedly, from the bottom of the chest, without raising the shoulders. Exhale slowly. Hold the breath for gradually increasing intervals. (b) Inhale slowly and count at a deliberate rate, until the breath is exhausted. (c) Inhale quickly and count as before. Vary by whistling softly and evenly, or by quoting familiar matter while the voice lasts.

Any sane exercises which secure deep abdominal and costal breathing and help to habits of breath control may well be practised for not more than five minutes. Breathing exercises should be linked up with discipline in phrasing and grouping in oral reading. The New York City Oral English Syllabus (p. 8-9) offers excellent exercises. Further suggestions of exercises in elementary speech sounds follow:

(a) Breathe deeply, and with lips closed hum softly, continuously and evenly while breath lasts, taking an easy pitch. (b) While breath lasts, hum in gentle, repeated strokes, giving the impetus with the diaphragm. Do not gasp more breath between strokes. (c) Breathe deeply and whisper *nun-nun-nun-nun*. (d) On an easy pitch, vocalize the same sound rapidly and softly, with a clear, resonant tone, avoiding nasal quality. (e) Breathe deeply; whisper *me-me-me-me*. (f) Vocalize softly, in rapid, repeated strokes. Do not run syllables together. Avoid nasality. (g) Similarly, whisper

and then vocalize *ha-ha-ha*, throwing the voice well forward and opening the mouth widely. (h) Whisper and then vocalize a series of combinations of the aspirate with various open sounds: *hoo, haw, hah, heh, hee*. (i) Whisper and then vocalize combinations of *hah* with these syllables. (j) Combine *hah* with open sounds without the aspirate: *hah-oo, had-aw, etc.* (k) Combine consonants with the open sounds, *boo, baw, beh, bah, bee, etc.* (l) Drill on consonant endings by rapid, clean-cut pronunciation of word-lists, exercising the desired articulation: *blood, flood, mud; luck, duck, struck etc.* (m) Drill on old-fashioned tongue twisters and difficult speech combinations. (n) Practise telephone conversations placing pupils in opposite corners of the room and securing low-voiced, exceedingly distinct speech. (o) Practice introductions before the class, taking care that every word, particularly the names, shall be distinctly heard. Try to vary the trite formulas to suit imagined conditions of introduction.

**Individual defects.** What shall we do with speech defects, such as stuttering, lisping, nasality etc.? Until we get specialists in speech, not much; it is easily possible to do more harm than good; but we can do something. By a study of a few well-selected books, such as those in the list appended, the teacher may acquire a rudimentary knowledge of the machinery of speech and the way it functions in forming the elementary speech sounds. A little practice will enable her to determine the positions of her own speech organs by feeling and by observation before the mirror. By all means, if possible, she should go further and take special work in phonetics and speaking under competent teachers, but even with a study of her own she may be able to help most of the cases which come to her. Of course, where a specialist is available, she should place the pupil who needs help in his hands.

Lacking such help, three courses are open to her. She may ignore the pupil's need, and leave the child doomed to isolation and stunted growth; she may help him through carefully directed imitation; or she may work improvement through correct understanding and manipulation of the organs of speech. A combination of the last two methods will often prove surprisingly effective.

The commonest conspicuous peculiarities of speech are, too high or too low pitch, weak or whispering voices, muffled or closed voices, lisping, stuttering, nasality and dialect.

In all cases the first step in successful treatment is to ascertain whether the vocal and articular organs are normal. The teacher may

assure herself by observation that teeth, hard and soft palate and tongue are normal. If they are not she should do what she can to bring the child to a specialist.

In all work with voices the formula of "little and often" is imperative. Begin all exercises quietly, without a jerk, keep always well within reserve power and quit before fatigued. Two minutes on an exercise and five or ten on a series are enough, frequently repeated. Always quit if rawness or strain appears and never exercise with a raw or sore condition present.

Finally, do not expect instant results. Persevere patiently. Says Doctor Muckey, "The time necessary for full development of muscular tissues under favorable conditions is approximately three years. When the vocal muscles have been severely injured or weakened by interference, a longer time is needed."

**Pitch.** This varies, of course, with every voice, but many school children speak, habitually, higher or lower than their natural pitch. To determine the normal pitch, that is, the tone which should predominate in speech, discover the whole range of voice. The middle tone between the extremes, or a slight variation from it, is the natural pitch.

Most women's and girls' voices are pitched too high. The shrillness of American tone is notorious. Simply calling attention, whenever necessary, to unnatural shrillness may help and in some cases correct. Care should be taken, however, not to heighten nervousness by publicly calling attention to a shrill, overstrained quality in a shy, highly strung pupil. The teacher must devise tactful ways — probably best in individual conference.

Quietude tends to lower vocal pitch. Try to emphasize to the pupil the value of repose and rest and the blessing of a serene voice. The best emphasis is consistent example. Nervousness and irritability in the voice and manner of a teacher are quickly communicated to the pupils. Induce quietude by the use of reading material suited in mood, such as Tennyson's *Crossing the Bar*, Gray's *Elegy*, Henley's *Margarita Sorori* and similar material.

**Weak voices.** Weak voices are caused generally by one or more of three things: general physical debility, sheer nervousness or stage fright, and weak muscles about the larynx. In all cases be sure that the pupil aims his voice at his audience.

Cases of general debility are beyond the English teacher's cure: She may, however, aid by breathing exercises and by calling particular attention of the school nurse, physical trainer, principal and parents to the condition.

For shyness and stage fright the teacher may draw out the pupil gradually through much systematic practice in reading, memorized recitation, speaking with aids (pictures, maps, blackboard, books or other materials<sup>1</sup>), beginning with the pupil's hobbies and absolutely familiar material. In many cases shyness and poor correlation are symptoms and results of profound physical and psychological changes in a child's life and should be dealt with gently, patiently and persistently.

Frequently shyness tends to contract the muscles about the mouth. In such cases the teacher may encourage the pupil to open his mouth fully, practising *ah* words. (See Closed voices, page 8)

Practice in fixing thought sequence by means of thorough preparation and careful outlines may help nervous pupils. Urge upon pupils the point of view that the first plunge is the worst, and that stage fright rapidly decreases with practice; that the way to learn to speak, as to learn to swim, is to plunge in.

Sometimes, although rarely, the cause of weak voices is weak muscles around the larynx. If the expedients suggested above fail to secure reasonable volume, the teacher may proceed on the assumption that the difficulty is muscular. Since it is impossible to strengthen the vocal cords, attention must be centered upon building up the muscles.

For weak muscles about the larynx, the remedy lies in very quiet manipulatory exercises, always without strain. In no case and at no stage should loud vocalization be indulged by a person with a weak voice. In all exercises the pupil should see that he begins gently, absolutely on pitch, with no sliding up to the tone, and avoiding nasal quality. Exercises: (1) Sustained, soft, mellow hum, on natural pitch of the voice. (2) Shorten to diaphragmatic strokes, with mouth closed: *hm-hm-hm*. (3) Combine throat murmur, *m-m*, with open sounds, beginning with *ee*, *mee-mee-mee* etc. Use similarly *eh*, *ah*, *ay*, *aw*, *oo* with *m*. (4) Combine any consonant with any vowel. Be careful that articulating organs are in proper position and that they do their work cleanly, in each case.

**Whispering voices.** In addition to the exercises and suggestions under Weak voices, above, with one breath, in short, sharp strokes and softly, repeat *hm-hm-hm-hm*.

Whispering voices result from too much breath escaping between the vocal cords while tone is being produced. Intelligent effort to control and regulate the supply of breath, either by the exercise suggested or similar ones, or by imitation, may help. Occasionally

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<sup>1</sup> See page 3.

there is a lesion in the vocal cords. In such cases a specialist should be consulted.

**Closed or muffled voices.** 1 Exercise frequently by exaggerated enunciation or by grimaces to induce muscular dexterity in tongue, jaws and lips.

2 Ease and loosen muscles by softly humming *m-m-m* with lips closed, in short, quick strokes. This can not be practised too much for increasing general pleasantness of tone. Practice periods, however, should be short (not exceeding three minutes) and frequent.

3 Be sure, in speaking, that the mouth is open so as to allow free escape to sound. Practise opening mouth widely in reading, speaking or singing. Practise on *ah* words — *father, martyr, cardinal* etc.

4 To get sound forward, out of the throat, practise *ha-ha-haaa-ah*, beginning and ending with clear *h* sound, repeating as often as possible with the same breath.

**Lisping.** Lisping is ordinarily the result of an inability to form *s* sounds correctly, as by giving them the sounds of *th*. It is a defect due to imperfect adjustment of the organs of speech, and its cure may be attempted by securing the proper formation of these sounds. First find out whether the tongue and teeth are normal.

*Th* is made by touching the tip of the tongue to both the upper and the lower teeth. Then explosively remove it, allowing the breath to escape between the teeth above the tip of the tongue. Teach the right position as described. Practise by pronouncing *thin, smithy, death, ninth*, and similar *th* words.

*S* is a soft hiss made by placing the tongue against the roof of the mouth over the front teeth and blowing out softly through the hollow tip of the tongue, which forms a channel.

Of the lisped *s*, Scripture, "Elements of Experimental Phonetics," page 395, says: "The most frequent fault arises from touching the point or dorsum of the tongue to the palate whereby the sides of the tongue leave the teeth and the air finds issue at one or both sides instead of through the medio-lingual cavity."

To change a lisped *s* into a normal one direct the tongue tip down and practise the sound; use a wire or a small hollow tube to hold the tip from the teeth. Practise pronunciation of words in *s; sis, sister, cisterian, system, sauce, sense* etc.

Tongue twisters and drill on readings furnishing a frequency of *s* and *th* words may yield results in cases of lisping.

**Stuttering.** Stuttering is more complex and sometimes arises from lack of coordination of the brain centers. (For scientific treatment, see book list appended.) Cases should be handled with the utmost delicacy. Consistent and patient efforts, however, may be made as follows:

1 Exercises in formation of fundamental speech sounds.

2 Breathing exercises, especially long, quiet breathing.

3 Careful preparation of materials, including visualization of words to be used or, in case of sudden demand, deliberate organization of thought and diction before speaking. In other words, the stutterer should know exactly what he wants to say and how he wants to say it before launching into a sentence. Practise daily upon brief prepared material.

4 Speak very slowly, not drawing words but taking time to correlate forces between words, and more time to gather forces between phrases and sentences. Never start until a thought has been completely expressed mentally.

5 As work progresses, encourage volume of voice.

6 In private conference, let teacher and pupil read slowly in unison, allowing the pupil to go on alone for a few sentences.

7 Give the pupil something to do with his hands while he talks.

**Nasality.** Nasality is caused by nasal obstructions or improper use of the soft palate. It is not "talking through the nose," as is commonly said, but failure to do so. If *m*, *n*, and *ng* are not properly made through the nose, nasality results.

1 See that abnormal obstructions are cleared from the nose—cold, adenoids, spurs etc. Develop resonance of voice.

2 Practise exercises for proper handling of palate. Exercises: (a) *m—ah*, *m—ah*; *m—ee*; *m—oh* etc. Consciously strive to eliminate nasal quality. (b) Practise clear, mellow sounding of open vowels. (c) In nasal words, that is, where *n* follows an open vowel, (*hand*, *pant*, *pan*, *banana*, *blanch*, *branch* etc.) practise carefully, separating the pronunciation of the vowel from the pronunciation of the *n*; in other words, pronounce the vowel open and complete, free from any nasal twang, stop the sound completely, add *n*. (d) Braden *a*'s even to the point of affectation, *hah-nd*, *bah-nd* etc.; this puts an aspirate between the open vowel and the nasal *n*.

**Dialects.** English teachers, especially in communities with large foreign elements, frequently are confronted with strong dialectic sounds in the speech of pupils. Dialectic difficulties vary widely in cause and in cure. In general, for Russian, German and other

northern dialects, tip-tongue exercises will help. For Latin dialects, mid or base tongue exercises should be practised.

To deal with dialectic difficulties the teacher must know the positions of the speech organs in the formations of the elements of language — vowels and consonants. It is necessary, also, to help the pupil to correct intonation, inflection, emphasis and cadence.

Clear diagrams illustrating the position of the articulating organs in every element of speech may be found in Krapp, "Pronunciation of Standard English in America"; Ripman, "Sounds of American Speech"; Lewis, "American Speech"; Smith, "Oral English for Secondary Schools"; Scripture, "Elements of Experimental Phonetics"; Aiken, "The Voice." The last named contains excellent detailed descriptions (pages 35-88) and a helpful pronunciation chart (pages 131-33 and back cover of the book).

In a given case of dialect, the teacher or other friend of the pupil should note and write down a list of the words the pupil mispronounces, trying to locate the sounds which cause difficulty. Then teach the child how to form the sounds correctly and drill upon words offering similar problems, securing at the same time proper intonation, inflection etc. Frederick Martin, director of speech improvement in the New York City schools, is the author of a supplement to the Syllabus in English called "Foreign Accent" published in 1917 which may prove a help to teachers struggling with this problem.

#### APPROACHES TO ORAL COMPOSITION

The most valuable approach to oral composition is through oral reading in the junior high school years. Reading, linked up with literature and talk, forms the backbone of training in good speech. Exercises in reading contemporary poetry and narratives of a patriotic nature as well as contemporary prose of a business or industrial character in current magazines and papers may be used with good results.

Edward Webster, in the January 1918 issue of the New England Leaflet, presents some very valuable suggestions as to the place of oral reading, which, he says, is "a definite, natural approach to the teaching of oral composition. For the self-conscious youth, it has less terror than the formal oral composition. . . . He may have to stand in front of the class, but he can depend upon his book and he has the consolation of knowing that he is not responsible for what he is reading. To the nervous, self-centered child this means much."

"My own experience," goes on Mr Webster, "has taught me that the passages read should be similar in form and in spirit to the assignment in oral composition which is to follow. For instance, if by Friday I wish a series of oral compositions dealing with exciting moments at a fire, I have various pupils prepare oral readings from such writers as Lytton, Dickens, Lafcadio Hearn and Jacob Riis, all of whom have written vividly of fires.

"Oral reading should be prepared at home. The teacher should give preliminary questions and directions to the pupil which should stimulate interest in the subject matter of the passage and in the practice readings. . . . What kind of person is speaking? In what mood? Does his mood change? What tone would you use in rendering each of these moods? What emotion is expressed by each of the sentences followed by a question mark? Practise the reading orally to reveal this kind of emotion."

Here are some very valuable hints on the relation of oral reading to the teaching of oral composition. Teachers will find a masterly treatment of the same theme in Hiram Corson's "Aims of Literary Study," and "The Voice and Literary Study."

Another basis to sound work is memorization. The amount of memorization must be determined by many factors, but in general it should be greatly increased and stressed. A minimum requirement of from 100 to 150 lines a year is certainly not too much. The surest stimulus to active and pleasurable memorization by pupils is a rich fund and artistic rendition of memorized treasures on the teacher's part, along with frequent clearing houses of quotation in class, literary societies and assemblies. Festivals and dramatics may be used.

As to the methods of memorizing, a helpful summary is contained in "The Economy and Training of Memory," by Henry J. Watt, particularly chapter 7. The following quotation from the report of the joint committee on the reorganization of English in the secondary schools (Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.) suggests a practical method:

"The method of memorizing is important. If pupils will . . . read aloud the passages selected, once or twice a day, thoughtfully, for a couple of weeks, they will find that they have unconsciously mastered them. Passages so memorized will be remembered much longer than those learned in shorter sections day by day. Several repetitions of such passages at gradually lengthening intervals will

be necessary to insure their permanent retention. Memorizing should follow, not precede, a clear perception of the progress of the thought."

To quote again from Mr Webster: "To have the greatest practical value in the teaching of oral composition, every declamation should prepare the way for a definite exercise which will bring into play the pupil's own expression of a similar experience."

**Speaking.** Drill in speaking will be of two general sorts, informal discussion, in which the proprieties of conversation are developed, and formal speeches, in which the rules of the platform are practised.

Spontaneous and informal work should be the preponderant type. This calls for the highest skill on the teacher's part, if she is to avoid aimless and undisciplined "talk fests." In the drawing out of slow and bashful pupils, in keeping her group to the point and challenging them to effective thinking and speech, in the preservation of an atmosphere of good humor and good manners, all with the least possible interference, her skill will be tried, but it is in such discussions that the best speaking exercise is secured to the children.

Much may be done to train our pupils in the fine art of conversation. The development of low-pitched, widely inflected, musical voices and clean-cut enunciation is a great step, but beyond lies a subtler technic of the matter. The ordinary conversation begins and ends with safe, shallow and profitless inanities—nothing given, nothing received. A series of class group conversations, which begin with an introduction of the principals to one another and require them within a dozen sentences to "launch out into the deep," to discover where the interests and experiences or needs of the others lie and to effect an exchange of spiritual or intellectual commodities mutually worth while, would develop a method and an attitude on the part of the pupils likely to prove of abiding and increasing value. Topics might be announced beforehand, so that any member might inform himself and formulate his ideas, and the class divided into conversational groups, by the teacher's appointment or their own choice. It would be well, as suggested, to have practice in social introductions; there is no commoner exhibition of awkwardness or source of embarrassment than in such presentations. Let the introducer, Mr W, introduce Mr Y to Messrs V and X, using fictitious and unfamiliar names. The critic should object if Mr W fails to pronounce each name very clearly and inescapably, and the principals should seek to vary

the usual trite formula of acknowledgment. After half a dozen sentences, at intervals in the course of the conversation, each participant should use the names of the others, naturally and easily, so paying them the subtle and winning compliment of apprehending their identities accurately. The habit of fixing faces and names, in which most of us fail miserably, is a great social and business asset which may be systematically cultivated. The class may be asked to observe their experiences of this sort outside of the schoolroom and put these exercises to practical and immediate use. A very useful oral English period may be secured on the topic "An interesting conversation in which I have participated recently," in which reports on both content and technic are made. A definite assignment requiring the pupils to interview someone outside of school and report results will yield big dividends.

Along with this effort to get something worth while in conversation, but subordinated to it, should go a constant campaign against slang and bad usage, and systematic measures to increase one's vocabulary (see Brewer, *Oral English*, pages 58-70). Pupils should be required to list and use words new to them, or the teacher may give lists of words not in poverty-stricken vocabularies, and have them used in sentences in class, or may devise games and exercises in paraphrasing. No better method of developing individual and fresh expression may be found than by a pupil's taking a sentence and reforming it in various and original ways.<sup>1</sup> Paraphrase verse or supply synonyms.

Mr Webster makes a valuable suggestion in point here. "From my own experience, I feel it is wise to begin a lesson in oral composition by having some pupil set a standard. I call upon a spirited lad who, I am reasonably sure, will do a forceful piece of work. He sets the pace, and somehow his confidence and his success seem to give confidence and success to the diffident. So convinced am I of the importance of setting a high standard at the beginning of the year that I rarely call upon any student for a sustained effort until I have discovered, through class discussion, who are likely to be leaders in the oral work."

Miscellaneous exercises helpful in many schools follow:

1 Salesmanship. Let rival salesmen present the merits of their wares. Whenever feasible the article to be sold should be presented to the class, and questions should be asked by various pupils and answered by the salesman.

<sup>1</sup> See biographical sketch of Robert Burns, in Cambridge edition of Burns's poems, for methods of his boyhood teacher.

2 Dictation of letters. The modern business letter is primarily an oral composition addressed to the eye, not to the ear. Frequent exercises in dictating letters may be given very profitably. With proper motivation these exercises will furnish training in idiomatic grouping of words, and in correct formulation of sentences and paragraphs. An actual business letter may be read to the class by one pupil and then another pupil may be required to dictate a reply to be taken down by the entire class.

3 Variation of 2. Define a situation in which a position of a certain type offering certain advantages and paying a stipulated salary, is open to a man possessing certain qualifications. (a) Appoint pupils to apply by letter (discuss what qualities are desirable in a letter of application). (b) Stage the personal interviews. Characters may be the employer, the office boy or stenographer, and the various applicants. Use the teacher's desk as scene.

4 Introductions (a) of one or more persons to one another or to a group; (b) of a speaker to his audience. Examples: introduce an after-dinner speaker to a political or literary club; make the speech. Introduce a distinguished Frenchman to the Daughters of the American Revolution; make the speech. Introduce an alumnus or other speaker to the high school assembly; make the speech.

5 Announcements. From the assembly platform, or section rooms, pupils should be used to make administrative announcements whenever possible. Some principals develop a staff of "heralds." One New York school has a two-minute resumé of the world's news by a pupil in daily assembly.

6 Discussion of professions and life work. Present the demands for, preparation for and possibilities of trades and professions.

7 Current events. This may be done, as Miss Adah Grandy suggests, through "oral newspapers." Divide assignments among "departments" or pupil groups, giving one charge of domestic and community news, another of foreign news, another cartoons, another editorials, sports etc. An oral school newspaper, dividing the school life similarly, is a pleasant variation.

8 Discussions of famous men and women. Let pupils impersonate famous characters and discuss their works or lives: Anna Howard Shaw, Mary Antin, Herbert Hoover etc. Supplementary readings in biography will enrich results.

9 Club work: debates, book reviews, lectures etc. In connection with after-dinner talks, Mr Webster furnishes the following stimulating and suggestive experience:

"I decided at the beginning of last year to teach the principles of after-dinner speaking in the Forum, our junior-senior literary club for boys. The study divided itself naturally into analytical work based on a careful study of models, and creative work. During the fall and winter months the boys met regularly in the library to analyze famous after-dinner speeches by Simeon Ford, Hamilton Wright Mabie, Chauncey Depew, Mark Twain, Horace Porter and Joseph H. Choate. At the first meeting the chairman analyzed Mark Twain's "New England Weather." The humor and literary finish of that speech made the opening program an interesting and fruitful source of deduction. The chairman was able to bring before the club the important principles lying back of every good after-dinner speech. During the next month, speeches were outlined and analyzed. Near the end of the first semester entire speeches were memorized and presented to the club.

"The second half was the test of the practicability of the work. I took pains to select a boy exceptionally gifted in appreciation of good literature, who is a good speaker and a leader in the club. I told him to saturate himself in the work of Mark Twain. This he did. On the night that he delivered his toast *Springfield, a City of Homes*, he literally brought down the house. He had done just what I wanted; he had set a standard. The talk that night was so enthusiastic that I knew a successful future for the course was assured. All tried to surpass the standard set and the result was that by June every one of the boys had delivered at least one creditable speech."

Mr Webster's course closed with a "real, live banquet at a real live hotel" with speeches "worthy of college men."

10 Travelogs. Assign any local industry worth careful study for a visit. For example, a team may report on a visit to a newspaper office, one member describing the news-gathering process, another the advertising, another the composing room, another the printing and circulation. A trip to the heating plant of the school building, or to the physics laboratory, if well equipped, may be very profitable. Some teams have included photographs of their excursion, showing members of the group in the course of the jaunt. Teams may vary in size according to the caliber of the subject. If your community has only one or two notable spots, use them and exchange the written account which should usually conclude such a project with some other community, in this country or abroad.

On the side of formal speaking, exhaustive textbooks are available. A few hints may be useful.

1 A broad foundation of informal discussion should precede the beginning of formal work. The teacher and class should try to draw out bashful or supersensitive pupils naturally in discussion.

2 Give every pupil frequent opportunity to talk. If classes are large, limit time severely. It is well to explain the whole purpose of such an exercise that it may be a project shared by the class rather than an onerous, superimposed task.

3 To further this "cooperative" spirit, the teacher should study to keep herself, ordinarily, in the background. At times every class should have a chairman, secretary and critic of its own. A good plan is to have new ones selected daily or at frequent intervals, at the beginning of a period, voting by hands. The teacher should not ordinarily appoint officers, but should insist on a fair rotation in office. The secretary's report offers a good review of the essential points of the preceding class hour.

4 The basic principles and practices of parliamentary usage should be one of the minimum requirements of the oral English work. It is well to have each class draw up a constitution and proceed regularly.

5 No one but a speech defective should be excused from speaking in his turn. Shy pupils may be helped by the teacher to aids and supplementary material — books, pictures, maps, blackboard etc. As the work progresses, voluntary and, later, required impromptus should be used.

6 Assure adequate preparation. In the beginning, the teacher may confer with speakers, to assist in organizing and rehearsing the speeches. Each speaker should be required to hand an outline of his task to the teacher at the beginning of the class period. He may himself be allowed to have brief topic headings in his hand. Teachers should in general discourage committing speeches to memory; adherence to the thought is vital and servile dependence upon the letter undermines this. It may be wise to have carefully memorized opening and closing sentences.

7 The most strategic elements of a passable speech are probably three: inviting opening sentence, convincing and conclusive closing sentence, and an idea. There should be consistent drill upon proper selection and arrangement of material.

The New York State Business English Syllabus suggests that the specific aims of oral class exercises are briefly (a) the elimination of mannerisms, careless enunciation and incorrect pronunciation, drawling of words, initial *w'y, well, now*, transitional *ah — ah*, the rising inflection at the end of declarative statements, overworking

certain words, grammatical errors and provincialisms and (b) the development of precision in the choice of words, confident manner and tone, good organization of material, ability to convey information briefly and clearly, ability to impel to action.

8 Criticism at first should be mild, but the attitude of the critic, although unmistakably sympathetic, should be just. The development of a wholesome attitude toward criticism, on the part of the pupil, is one of the greatest moral results of the oral English emphasis.<sup>1</sup> Not mere talk, but effective speech, is the end. Every recitation, whether in the so-called oral English period or not, must help by giving practice in the principles of such speech.

9 The critical sense of the class should be able to distinguish the propriety of three types of recitations: single word replies for which the speaker should sit (these should be exceptional); brief recitations of one or two sentences for which he should rise beside his seat; topical recitations or formal talks of considerable length, for which he should go to the center front of the room. The class should demand a reasonable observance of these types as a matter of courtesy, convenience and effective cooperation. Wherever possible, the class should be seated in a circle or around a table.

10 Criticism of technic or mechanics should generally be clearly subordinated to criticism of the content and ordering of a talk. Good carpenter work is highly desirable; brains are indispensable. Encourage the class to challenge specious and shallow opinions and uninformed or unsupported statements; to face a definition of issues and to pounce ruthlessly upon ramblings from the point.

11 The first question to be asked in judging a speech is "Is the idea worth while?" The oral English period offers an incomparable opportunity for getting into quick and quickening touch with contemporary world events and tendencies. There is no such

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<sup>1</sup> The following is a further extract from a letter from the Adjutant General's office explaining why many candidates for appointment as officers failed. It is quoted here because its application is general:

"A last important element that seems to me to be lacking in the moral and mental make-up of some of our students here, is the characteristic of grit. Not that they would prove cowardly in battle, necessarily, but some have exhibited a tendency to throw up the sponge upon the administration of severe rebuke or criticism. Their 'feelings have been hurt' and they resign. They have never been taught the true spirit of subordination. They are not ready for the rough edges of life. The true training school should endeavor to keep one's eyes fixed upon the goal rather than upon the roughness of the path, to realize that one unable to rise above the hard knocks of discipline can not hope to face with equanimity the tremendous responsibilities of the officer under modern conditions of warfare. This ideal of grit belongs in the schoolroom as well as upon the campus."

period elsewhere in the school program for the development of sane, informed, intelligent Americanism. The boys and girls now in our high schools are charged with the responsibility of internationalism on a scale of which their fathers, as a generation, never dreamed. Teachers of vision should seize every opportunity to enlarge the pupil's information and his power to handle it, to the making of a fairer world through world processes.

### THE RELATION OF ORAL TO WRITTEN COMPOSITION

Many teachers hail oral work as a release from the minute and burdensome labor of the criticism of written themes, with little definite technic for relating the two effectively. Oral composition is not a *substitute* for written work; it should be generally a scientific and economical *approach* to it. A skilled procedure would be something as follows, breaking up into some eight distinct steps:

1 Teacher and class should select theme topics. Usually, to secure a relatively common task, subject to judgment on one basis these should be limited in number; two or possibly three in a large class may be allowed for variety. The topics should be very carefully phrased.

2 Literary models should be used frequently, as suggested by Mr Webster, to kindle emulation, but mere copying should be discouraged.

3 Under these topics, teacher or a pupil acting as secretary, should be gathered any ideas the class is able to contribute, in a rapid-fire assembling of the "raw material."

4 The class should be given a short time — perhaps ten minutes — to select, supplement and order the material for presentation as oral themes.

5 The second half of the period should be used for the oral presentation of themes, with class criticism of form and content. Thus are anticipated numberless errors which otherwise are reinforced by writing.

6 At home, or the following class period, the themes thus planned and criticized should be written.

7 Half a dozen of them should be placed upon the board for criticism and correction.

8 The teacher should review the themes and criticize them in class or conference.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Two very helpful books in this connection are W. R. Brown's "How the French Boy Learns to Write" (Harvard Press) and J. P. Hartog's "The Writing of English" (Oxford Press, 1908).

Oral work may help in improving the details of writing. Through it, two important senses are brought to bear upon spelling — the kinesthetic and the auditory. Much of our bad spelling is a direct result of vicious enunciation; the pupil has never seen, heard or pronounced the word correctly. Two things we may secure through oral means which will aid spelling: emphasis upon all enunciation, particularly correct pronunciation of words to be spelled, and adequate assurance that pupils understand the meanings of words, and the sections which establish and modify their meanings.

Punctuation, too, will be improved by careful teaching of speech. Punctuation is to the eye what pauses and inflections are to the ear. Teach children to punctuate with their voices, and they will have gone a long way toward accurate written punctuation. Carry on the oral and written punctuation with the same material, at the same time. For instance, use devices like the following: Present unpunctuated matter, mimeographed or upon the board. Have the material read, at first silently by all until the sense is clear; then orally by a pupil while another inserts punctuation according to the pauses and inflections of the reader's voice. Similarly, let a pupil read his own written work, and the remainder of the class determine the punctuation as indicated by the reading.

The heart of the problem of grammar lies in oral use. *The ear must be trained to the correct form.* Drill on the correct form, through language games, or quotations, establishing and reinforcing the right use, must be provided. Some one has suggested that children who commit to memory Robert Louis Stevenson's "Garden of Verses," are partly fortified in usage. "When I was sick and *lay* in bed" etc. and "I saw the next door garden *lie*" etc. Deming's "Language Games for the Grades" (Beckly-Cardy Co., Chicago), Mahoney's "Standards in English" (World Book Co.) or Sheridan's "Speaking and Writing English" (Benj. F. Sanborn Co.), all provide material for useful language games.

This training in correct usage will need to be largely individual. Teacher and class should list each pupil's mistakes; the correct forms should be used in five or ten sentences of oral drill, frequently at first, until the teacher has assured herself that right usage is a matter not of rule but of habit.

For practical purposes, all the words in a sentence fall into three classes: structural words (subject, predicate and object); modifying, decorative or explanatory words; connectives and particles. As a device helpful in grammar and in oral reading, pupils should

make topographical maps of sentences, placing the words on different levels, according to their importance.

As aids in paragraph or composition planning the following devices may prove useful: (a) Have a piece of written work read aloud, requiring the class to guess the paragraph divisions or to jot down rough outlines of the thought, as a test of organization. (b) Require skeleton outlines of oral or written themes before the themes are detailed. Similarly, require outlines of assembly addresses, sermons, public addresses etc. (c) Read aloud a list of items, jumbled at random, perhaps concerning two entirely different topics, and require class to separate the topics and order the items. (d) Give pupils topic sentences on slips of paper. Let each spend ten minutes organizing a paragraph or short speech, with special attention to transition words, topical headings or sentences which may be used as brief notes. Let the speeches be made from such plans. (e) Assign problems in letter writing, as suggested on page 13 of the English Syllabus, requiring pupils to dictate. Let the class check up mistakes, bad arrangement and awkward handling.

Original short stories, told by groups, form an entertaining and extremely valuable exercise in oral work, which carries over into written composition. Miss Adah Grandy, of Minneapolis, Minn., and others have secured very notable results by the following procedure:

1 The teacher writes upon the board the formula of a good yarn, something like this:

*a* Introduction

Time, place, leading characters, lesser characters

*b* Moving force

*c* Opposing force

*d* Turning point

*e* End

A simpler outline is found in Mrs Emogene Simons's "First Year English for High Schools," page 141: *A* tries to do something, *B* opposes or aids, *A* succeeds or fails. *A* or *B* may mean either a single character or a whole group.

2 The class applies this outline to any familiar story until the significance of the terms is clear.

3 The class then builds the elements of a composite story by having various members suggest conditions, leading characters, moving force, etc. Repeat this until a number of promising outlines

have been evolved, and the class has grasped and contributed to the scheme.

4 Divide the class into groups, each with a chairman; let the groups meet in various corners of the room or elsewhere and work up their original stories. They should rehearse before presenting their stories to the class.

5 Let each group present its story. A story may be merely told by a sequence of narrators, or it may be partly or entirely dramatized. A successful plan is to have the team divided into the author (who may be represented by a sequence of pupils), the chief characters and the minors. The author launches the yarn and injects any necessary transitional material; he may condense much action or time into a few sweeping sentences to facilitate the movement of the story. The author should be fluent or well prepared. The climax of the story should be in dialog or action by the chief characters; minors may be used to speak for the author, describe the situation or the principals, as seems effective.

6 If the results justify, present the best stories before wider audiences. Finally, have them written, each member of each group writing the story evolved by his team. The best of them should be published.

For this device there need be no lack of source material. Pupils should use the newspapers, the "movies," literature and life — old family legends or everyday adventures.

For character sketches, a useful class project is the compilation of a Book of Every-day Heroes, collected from the records of heroism in the newspapers and magazines, the Carnegie hero lists or the New York police department's roll of honor. In all types of composition, the class should look out for good illustrative press clippings, good plots or effective story-telling, fine bits of description etc., as bases for oral or written work.

A group of pupils may select parts from literature — Natty Bumppo, Mr Pickwick, Rip Van Winkle, Silas Marner, Portia, Mrs Malaprop and others, individually and in conference work up the speaking and acting necessary to present the characters, and then present, letting the class guess the characters.

Debating should form a considerable segment of the oral work. In life the common form of debate is good-humored and courteous difference with friends and acquaintances; in the classroom, ordinarily, debate should be as spontaneous and informal as possible. Frequently the class should become a debating society, with pupil officers and well-defined rules of order. Let a pupil committee in

conference with the teacher submit topics. It is valuable to have a tournament each year between sections of the same class and between classes. The Central High School, Syracuse, has a plan which involves several hundred pupils in such a tourney each year, and develops admirably their ability to speak.

### THE RELATION OF ORAL WORK TO LITERATURE

A major part of the study of literature involves oral work. Every masterpiece has in it passages that are models of English expression. Many such portions should be memorized and made the permanent possession of the pupil. An epigram, a happy phrase, a well-made anecdote, or a choice bit of poetry will be valuable as a part of his voice equipment. A brief list of suggested uses of speech in such a connection must include the following:

1 Retelling of all or parts of stories. Skilful selection and condensation should be required.

2 Selection and discussion of large topics. For example, in the study of Ivanhoe, ideas of chivalry; conditions of feudalism; compared with modern social and economic organization; relation of Normans and Saxons, its effect on character and language; the status of the Jew; the Crusades and their effects; the fool, compared with Touchstone et al.; English outlawry; methods of warfare then and now; ideals of manhood and womanhood portrayed etc.

3 Pupils may be asked to prepare their own questions and to lead a discussion by the use of them.

4 Varieties of dramatization: (a) impersonation of single characters; let Anna Howard Shaw or Mary Antin, impersonated by pupil, tell the story of her life, or make a characteristic appeal; (b) staging by pupils, in groups, of selected scenes; (c) use of such scenes before other classes or school; (d) the class or school play or pageant, involving all grades and departments — a superb community project.

5 Original character sketches: (a) character through soliloquy; Ivanhoe's thoughts upon arriving at his home; Horatius's thoughts at the bridge; Shylock's remarks after the court scene and the adverse judgment; Odysseus's thoughts in the cave of Polyphemus etc.

6 Familiar literary characters projected into contemporary situations: Sir Roger at the town library; Achilles or Leatherstocking in the trenches; Mr Pickwick in the subway or at the ballgame etc.

7 Travelogs. An oral travelog is a delightful device for vitalizing literature and the lives of authors. A "team" sets out to present

to the class the results of a literary pilgrimage. By means of guide books, maps, postal cards, pictures, lantern slides, chalk talks etc., the class moves through the Shakspere country, or visits the haunts of Cooper and Irving. The trip may be broken into a number of talks in sequence. In launching this work the following hint from the Illinois Bulletin may be helpful:

The teacher should begin by giving such a composite description herself, with the help of picked students with whom she has worked it up in conference. Then she should assign subjects to the groups, with the aid of the class, outlining subjects on the board. During the week, she should meet the groups in conference, giving each twenty or thirty minutes.

8 Lantern slides, pictures and music should be used freely. For example, pictures illustrating Shakspere's life, and phonograph records of the songs from the plays make a delightful program, with oral interpretations by a student committee. Helpful sources of such materials are as follows:

The Visual Instruction Division, State Department of Education, Albany, N. Y., furnishes many valuable wall and hand pictures and lantern slides. (Express and breakage only fee.)

The Newark Public Library, Newark, N. J., publishes a pamphlet entitled, "Aids in High School Teaching: Pictures and objects" (\$1). Address Elm Tree Press, 14 Mt Prospect pl., Newark, N. J., or H. W. Wilson Co., White Plains, N. Y.

A "Manual for the Use of Pictures in Teaching English, Latin, etc." by Cornelia Carhart Ward, is published by the University Prints, Newton, Mass. (25c)

The Metropolitan Museum of Arts publishes a "Handbook for the Use of Schools" and many of the pictures listed are available in post card reproductions.

The Perry Pictures, Perry Pictures Company, Malden, Mass., the Thompson Company, Syracuse, N. Y., and George P. Brown and Co., 38 Lovett st., Beverly, Mass., offer very helpful selections.

Music correlated with literature has been more or less systematized by the leading phonograph companies.

#### CORRECTING AND CRITICIZING ORAL WORK

1 Emphasize powers before attacking weaknesses. "What we want is not freedom from faults but abundance of powers." We must begin by praising what is good, though it be but a promise, and work with what we have rather than what we have not. Teach children that criticism is approving as well as destructive. Ordinarily, use "comment" rather than "criticize." Avoid scattering comment; direct criticism toward one thing at a time.

2 Anticipate errors by careful prevision. Hold conferences with pupils who are to speak. If this is impossible with all, select those whose need is greatest, or those whose promise is great, and arrange conferences to reach all, in rotation. Require outlines of assigned talks to be in teacher's hands at least a day before that set for the talk. This makes for careful preparation.

3 Develop class criticism — the sense of free give and take in the spirit of well-bred, helpful English, wisely taught. The ability to detect errors instantly and to make corrections is developing with astonishing rapidity in the English classrooms. The teacher may appoint or the class elect a class critic, who lists all errors and reports at the close of the period, others supplementing with whatever escapes the notice of the critic; a number of critics may be appointed, each to look out for a particular thing, one posture, another voice and enunciation, others preparation, interest etc.; or each pupil may be assigned to watch particularly the work of another as a whole, criticizing as constructively as possible.

4 Keep individual records of oral work. Teachers have found it worth while to keep a notebook with a separate page for the record of oral work of each pupil, jotting down from each recitation comments or criticisms likely to prove helpful. For example, a typical page reads thus: "John Ellery, 1/1/18, slouches, hands in pockets, looks out at window; goin', seein', thinkin'. 1/17/18, does not face class, substitutes n for ng, needs fuller preparation etc." In a very short time the teacher discovers the individual tendencies, through this record, and may set out intelligently to correct, strengthen and improve the pupil's work.

Sometimes it is worth while to hand slips with these comments to pupils concerned, at the close of class periods, if time is lacking for class discussion of the points noted. These data should form a basis for conferences.

Pupils may be encouraged to keep individual records, also, and to criticize and to rate performances. A score card adapted from the following may be placed in the hands of each pupil, asking for specific and detailed criticism:

Name	Posture	Enunc.	Interest	Comments	Grade
1					
2					
3 etc., etc.					

The student committee on criticism may determine the ranking of the speakers and announce results, or may read particularly

"pat" comments, or the teacher may use the cards as "ammunition" for class or conference criticism.

The most useful individual records should be those kept by each pupil of his own work. In English notebooks, it is the practice of some teachers to have the first sheet a "never again page" together with a "things to work for" column. Here pupils keep whatever criticisms of their own work they deem worth while. At intervals it is well to have "confession-days" when each pupil reviews his own weaknesses and mistakes in class.

5 See that criticism functions by means of individual conferences. By records carefully kept, it may be possible to group pupils guilty of common errors, and to confer with them jointly, drilling for the elimination of the weaknesses noted. Personal, individual conferences are, however, usually more illuminating and useful.

N. B. One of the large uses of conferences is to come to know the pupil — whatever about him is of interest and value. For effective teaching the teacher should know the pupil as an individual. Some teachers keep a systematic record which includes such facts as the following: Name, age, address, school program, work outside of school, favorite subject, favorite reading (a) books, (b) periodicals, hobby, plans for future, three most memorable experiences, home facts. The pupils fill out such cards cheerfully, and the data so furnished are an invaluable asset to effective teaching in every branch of English work.

"The conference time may be used in various ways. For two or three rounds it would be well to have the pupils rehearse their talks to the teacher in advance of the class appearance. In this way some pupils will be able to deliver their speeches for whom there would not be time in the class period. If the teacher finds a tendency among the pupils to memorize their talks, she should change her procedure, and use the conference time in talking over the ideas, structure, illustrations etc., which the pupils expect to use. She should maintain always an attitude not of positive direction but of friendly advice; her business is merely to help the pupil to work out his own ideas in his own way. After a while she will find that she can now and then pass over the conference with some of the best ones." (Bulletin of Illinois Association, Jan. 1, 1913).

In addition to this general purpose, the teacher should have, in each conference, a specific purpose dominating all others — so that the pupil, upon going away, is not confused with many things but *absolutely clear as to one, in which he may improve his work.* Some one has listed the motives to which a teacher in such conferences may appeal as three: pride in language, rare in secondary

school pupils; altruism, best utilized through team work or other representative function; and self-interest.

6 Regularly before making up the monthly grade, the teacher should give examinations in oral English. This may be done in two ways. First. Establish cooperative relations with some teacher in another department (see *Better Speech in School and Community*, below) and furnish her with forms to check up oral work in her classes. Some such form as this may be used:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Estimate of oral work: Excellent —; Good —; Fair —; Poor —.

Suggestions for improvement:

Second. Apply this same device in your own classes in English. Judge the oral work on the basis of representative, prepared speaking, upon which the pupil knows he is to be judged. These two tests may be best used in combination. It is particularly desirable to apply the first one, that is the interdepartment test, and to emphasize to the pupil the fact that he may be judged and in part graded in oral English at any time and in any classroom.

### BETTER SPEECH IN SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

It is very evident, since correct speech is a matter of habit, that it is an affair of the entire school and the community. The greatest success in oral English will not be achieved until all teachers are compelled to do their share. Teachers of other subjects, as well as teachers of English, must help to make correct oral expression a habit. Pupils must not unlearn in the history class what they learn in the English class. The following suggestions may help in securing for the English teachers more adequate cooperation with other departments:

1 A *school standard* in oral (and written) work should be established. The requirements should be printed and scrupulously enforced. Here is a sample from one high school:

#### *School Standard of Oral Work*

With rare exceptions, pupils should rise to recite. Topical recitations should predominate in all subjects, and for them the pupil should take the floor, facing the class squarely. He should not begin to speak until thus placed, and should not move to leave the floor until he has concluded his remarks. Recitations should be in the form of complete sentences. Erect posture and vigorous bearing are fundamental.

Clean-cut enunciation is likewise basic. Slovenly or inarticulate recitations should not be accepted. They should be corrected, either at once, or in

the case of hypersensitives, after class, and, if persisted in, penalized heavily. Treat similarly recitations which fall below the standards of good English.

Pupils who habitually use bad English should be reported to the English department on the blanks provided for that purpose. A list of errors noted should accompany the report.

2 In the *New England Leaflet* for January 1918, Edward Webster suggests another tried and successful device. He says:

“The work is almost entirely oral, and concerns itself with those blunders in speech which are most common and persistent. Sentences containing troublesome constructions are repeated orally many times in school or at home, in order that the ear may welcome the new sound *I wanted the president to be him*, or what not. When we are reasonably sure that the pupils are no longer startled by the sound of the correct forms we deduce the rules with them. After at least ten demons of speech have been attacked in this manner we shut down the machinery of the school and give a rapid fire examination. The section-room teacher dictates as fast as he would ordinarily talk and the pupil writes only the critical part of the sentence, making his choice as to the correct form. Thus there is no time in which to reason out rules. Everyone must depend upon his ear, and this he can do if he has been faithful to the oral drill. Soon after the examination the results are tabulated according to classes — freshman, sophomore etc. — and are read in the assembly hall. The students are as interested . . . as in the report of a game. Five times during the year the whole school is examined in this fashion. At the end of the series, the class receiving the highest average is awarded a picture for its home room, and great is the enthusiasm in the assembly hall when the president receives the trophy on behalf of his victorious class.

“Such a method of handling the common errors in every-day speech has two advantages. All the teachers of the school are brought into the examining work and are thus made aware of the mistakes that are undergoing the process of extermination and the entire student body is fighting the same solicisms at the same time. Teachers of shop work and mechanical subjects are continually asking for old subjects in order that they may keep up with the current drill work; and the pupils who find the examinations difficult are tutored from time to time by the honor students in English. Everyone gets into the campaign because everyone believes in the value of the work.”

3 Through announcements at general teachers' meetings, or through bulletins at intervals, teachers in other departments may be asked to help to accomplish this result.

*Example:* An effort is being made to stamp out slovenly enunciation and to secure clean-cut speech in the school. Will you please make a point of speaking of this to your classes, and list conspicuous cases of bad enunciation, with specific errors under the pupil's name. The chairman of the English department will call for your notes and helps.

Such a bulletin is more effective over the signature of the principal.

4 Through periodic bulletins, keep other teachers in touch with the tools the English department is trying to supply, in order that teachers of other subjects may know what to expect from their children, and may reinforce the English teaching if they care to or can, by using the tools indicated.

*Example:* Pupils have been taught in the English classes not to begin sentences with "Why," "well-a," "and-a," "er" etc. They may be expected and required to begin statements clearly and directly.

*Example:* During the past weeks pupils in the second year English classes have been giving special attention to the natural, logical arrangement of facts. They may be held to well-ordered recitations.

5 As Doctor Briggs suggests in the English Journal (March 1916), the English teachers should differentiate their demands upon the several subjects and teachers. The history and some science classes may cooperate with the English forces in handling larger units of recitation, in organization of materials, in demanding complete and definite statement etc. Exactness and logical arrangement may grow in connection with mathematics, and the foreign languages should contribute enlarged vocabularies, interest in words, synonyms, development etc. Lists may be secured from the Latin, German and French classes, of words with common English cognates or derivatives, and the English forms used in the English classes. Teachers in other departments who have a fine feeling for diction may develop a similar quality in their children, to the advantage of all concerned, and the English department should recognize and encourage these outposts of its own work.

6 In reciprocity, much of the work of other classes may be reenforced in the English rooms.

a Ask teachers of other subjects for supplementary readings in their subjects suitable for popular review as oral compositions.

b Ask for lists of oral theme topics from each subject and year, preferably annotated to indicate the most strategic time of the year for a discussion in the English classes to prove of most value to the other subject.

c Ask teachers of other subjects for good examples from their fields (textbook or laboratory materials) for the next few weeks' study of narration (history, ancient and modern languages); description (science, history and ancient and modern languages); exposition (history, sciences, mathematics, domestic arts, manual training) etc. In this way, good review of other subjects may be used as materials for constructive work in English.

7 One New York State high school has found it worth while to print reminders emphasizing the desirability of good English and to post them conspicuously in every classroom of all departments. For example, one poster reads, in large letters:

SAY IT IN GOOD ENGLISH

Teachers of different grades and subjects should make it a business to pass on to colleagues dealing with the same pupils helpful information as to personal peculiarities, abilities or weaknesses, in order that there may be a continuity of campaign. A conference between first year high school teachers and eighth grade teachers, about a month after the opening of school in September, when the high school teachers have begun to know their pupils, yields results worth while in every phase of English work.

Student speech and manners are improved by a free exchange of amenities between grades, throughout the school system. Classes in the high school may invite grade groups or single pupils to present a story, song or recitation, and reciprocate the courtesies from the best of their own work.

BETTER SPEECH CAMPAIGNS

1 Enlist the grades and the community — the county or counties if possible. A committee of business men and women, high school and grade teachers is a good working organization, but it is better to have a committee of the student body themselves to initiate and conduct the campaign, in conference with older folk. Such a committee may be made up of representatives of the different classes and schools, literary societies and other contributory organizations.

2 Launch and maintain a vigorous, varied and challenging publicity campaign.

a Post upon bulletins, in the school paper, on the blackboards or upon special cards such quotations as these:

“Mend your speech a little

Lest it mar your fortunes.”—*Shakspeare*

"I advocate, in its full intent and for every reason of humanity, of patriotism, of religion, a more thorough culture of speaking."—*Beecher*

"Ninety-nine men in every hundred in the crowded professions will probably never rise above mediocrity because the training of the voice is entirely neglected and considered of no importance."—*Gladstone*

*b* Let the student committee or council accumulate through the year the vulgarities, slang, rapid and worn-out expressions, tasteless examples or inaccuracies of enunciation, pronunciation and grammar noted in common usage, and post them, two at a time, to be eliminated from the speech of the school, posting in a parallel column two expressions to be added to the common vocabulary and use. Begin with long blank cards and, as expressions are added, allow the old expressions to stand as reminders, so that the list grows longer week by week. These words should be emphasized in all English classes on the same days.

*c* Use cartoons and posters, suggested and drawn by pupils, to emphasize the campaign. Examples in Alabama were delineations of the dictionary pursuing the villain "Ain't" out of the gates of "Good English Town." Limericks and jingles may be evolved.

*d* Emphasize the purposes and details of the better speech campaign by student announcement in assemblies, perhaps by sending pupils to explain the movement to the grades and to women's clubs and church organizations whose cooperation and sympathy may be enlisted.

*e* Secure all the newspaper interest and space possible in aid of the campaign. Link up the movement in the schools as far as possible with the life of the community.

*f* Establish an oral English exhibit or demonstration program, calculated to show to the friends, parents and guests of school the fruits of a good year of work with the spoken word. Here assemble the posters, word lists, cartoons, news clippings and other publicity materials called out by the campaign, including the printed cards, "Say It In Better English" and the quotations from distinguished men testifying to the importance of mastery of oral English. Lay upon tables or post where they may be reached, written work organized and vitalized and planned by the oral approach. Present a program made up of entertaining, humorous and inspiring oral work such as has been developed in the classes: recitation of memorized poetry, a dramatized application for a position, including the dictation of the letter of application, the employer's reply and the personal application; a play created by the pupils on the basis of an original plot or as a dramatization of scenes studied in litera-

ture; a discussion of some unit of literature studied, illustrated by lantern or reflectoscope pictures and by correlated music. A short debate or a travelog into literary lands may be substituted for this.

*g* Send pupils to visit the women's clubs, commercial club, civic clubs and similar organizations and invite them to cooperate with the schools and to be the guests of the schools in such programs as that indicated above.

*h* Invite capable and leading men and women of the community to speak to the school on such topics as the following: "The business man's speech: relative amount of speaking and writing" (or English in the professions); "The training of a telephone operator, and hints of general value therein" (by a telephone official); "English, voices and manners in a great store."

### CONCLUSION

The emphasis that is being put today on oral expression is one of the most potential and vitalizing influences at work in the field of English. Schools are just beginning to grapple with the problem of correcting the American speech. We, as teachers, must realize that we are only on the threshold of the development of a program that may make possible in the lives of the people "an accurate, forceful, living speech which shall be adequate for ordinary intercourse and capable of expressing the thoughts and emotions of men and women in other relations of life."

By our early experiences it is clear that there ought to grow up by reason of this oral emphasis a *thoughtful* and an *articulate* generation. The idealism of war has stimulated the ambition of the Nation. To capitalize this ambition is the chief duty education has at this time, and the movement for a better speech is one of the best opportunities education has to realize that duty. It has become the task of the English teacher to provide motives for the normal exercise of the impulse to narrate, to picture, to expound, or to argue and "to free the channels of expression" by molding habits of thinking and by training the speech organs. This is a task worthy the age in which we are living. It is a privilege not to be regarded carelessly for each of us to have a part in this great movement; it should be a joy as well.



## BRIEF LIST OF HELPFUL BOOKS

**New York State Department of Education.** English Syllabus for Elementary Schools

— English Syllabus for Secondary Schools

**Guide to American Speech Week.** National Council of Teachers of English, 68th st. & Stewart av., Chicago, Ill. 25c

**Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools.** Gov't Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20c

**New York City Board of Education.** Oral English Syllabus. Bulletin of Teaching English to Foreigners.

**Lewis, Calvin L.** American Speech (for physiology of voice). Scott, Foresman and Co.

**Ripman, Walter.** Sounds of American Speech and Specimens. Revised ed. 1914

**Corson, Hiram.** The Voice and Spiritual Education. Macmillan Files of the *English Journal*, 68th st. & Stewart av., Chicago, Ill., of the Leaflet of the New England Association of Teachers of English, A. B. De Mille, Milton, Mass., or of the Illinois Leaflet, H. G. Paul, Urbana, Ill.

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